

Adjusting to life after Iraq

Soldier describes how injury has changed his world

By Alexandra Williams
284th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

The light went out forever on May 7, 2004, in Karbala, Iraq, for Staff Sgt. Jason Pepper.

That's the day his M113 personnel carrier was hit by an Improvised Explosive Device while on patrol with Company B, 16th Engineer Battalion. Besides suffering other injuries, Pepper lost his sight.

"I couldn't speak, but I could hear. I was lying on my team leader who was also injured and laid on the floor of our M113 personal carrier," said Pepper. "I couldn't move my body and I thought, 'Oh my God, I am dead,'" he said.

Career came to an abrupt end after explosion

Pepper spent four months in Baghdad and one week in Karbala before his career as a combat engineer was brought to an abrupt end.

The 27-year-old New Jersey native had worked as an emergency medical technician with the Waldwick, N.J., fire department before joining the Army in 1995. He met his wife, Heather, the daughter of a 284th Base Support Battalion employee, in October 1998 after being assigned to the 16th Engineer Battalion in Giessen.

"It was love at first sight. In February 1999 we got married," he said.

In September 2000 the couple moved to Fort Riley, Kan., where Jason was assigned to the 1st Engineer Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. Two years later he requested to return to Germany. "Actually I wanted to go



Photo by Alexandra Williams
Staff Sgt. Jason Pepper, his wife Heather and 2-year-old daughter Naomi are reunited in Giessen. They still have a long way ahead of them before they can live a normal life again.

to Schweinfurt, but my former first sergeant recognized my name on the list of the replacement company in Frankfurt and brought me back to Giessen," he said.

In April 2003 the battalion prepared for deployment to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. Medical reasons prevented Pepper from deploying with his unit. "I am a field Soldier, not a garrison Soldier," he said. "When I first joined the Army I went straight to Bosnia for 11 months. Since that time I deployed five times."

Finally in February of this year he was able to follow his buddies. "They blessed off my orders because they needed NCOs down-

range," Pepper said.

Then his world changed dramatically on May 7.

"I was in a daze when they evacuated me. My voice would just not come out and I was spitting blood as I was trying to talk," he said. "Everything felt numb. Suddenly my voice kicked in and I felt pain. I asked, no I yelled for pain medication. I was yelling because everything was muffled and slow motion."

"Then the helicopter came and I passed out. I guess my body just shut down or maybe it was because of the medication; I don't know. When I woke up I was in Baghdad and my brother, who also deployed to Iraq, was by my side," Pepper said. "I was glad he was with me. Within six hours he was rushed to my bedside. At this point I still didn't know the extent of my injuries."

Speculations about injuries

Countless cuts and bleeding wounds left the doctors speculating about Jason's condition.

"They spoke about amputations and that my face was disfigured so that nobody would recognize me. Finally the doctors explained to me that my eyeballs were gone. That's when it hit me. I asked myself how I would be able to take care of my family. It was so devastating, there were so many emotions. I felt like a lost dog," he said.

A chaplain helped Jason finally call his wife, Heather.

"I wanted to talk to her and tell her that I was alive," Pepper said. "I wished to be with her, but at the same time I was afraid. I could feel the cuts in my face, I knew my eyes were gone and I was concerned about how I might

look. After all they had told me my face was disfigured."

Evacuation to Germany

Jason was evacuated to Germany to the medical facilities in Landstuhl where he was reunited with Heather and his 2-year-old daughter Naomi.

"I had to smoke a couple of cigarettes to build up the courage before I went inside the hospital," said Heather. "When they first came to my house at 4 p.m. that day, I thought he was dead. Then I was told that I would not recognize him due to the injuries. They talked about possible blindness and amputations."

"It was overwhelming at times, but I had to keep myself together for our 2-year-old daughter. I basically lived by the phone and I ended up telling the story about a million times. I was glad that he was alive and in the hospital, but I also asked myself: now what? I prayed — let it only be one arm they amputate not both arms," Heather said.

"Most upsetting was that most of the community knew about it before I did. The other guys in the company called their wives right after it happened while casualty [assistance] had to wait for details before they could contact me. It could have happened that a spouse would have told me while I was walking the dog," she said.

To her relief she learned Jason would keep both arms.

A few days later the Peppers were flown stateside to the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., so Jason could undergo several surgeries.

Jason returned to Germany with an eye prosthetic in his left eye and a marble in his right eye to keep the socket in shape until the second prosthetic becomes available.

The stay at Walter Reed and Fisher House helped the couple prepare for the long recovery still ahead of them, they said. A psychologist helped Jason express his inner turmoil.

Going forward by expressing emotions

"She talked to me and suddenly my emotions started to come out. I told her about my fears, and once I spoke about it, started to cry. I cried for 45 minutes. It was good to talk to someone else. I always wanted to stay strong for Heather, but now I could let all my fears out. It really helped me because I was able to accept my blindness. I knew I couldn't change what happened, so I had to take a step forward," Pepper said.

Leaving safety

Leaving the relative safety of Walter Reed was hard for him, he said, because there he was able to meet other Soldiers who were in a similar situation. "I was only the fifth Soldier who returned blind, but it was good to be around others who also had defects. Over here I still feel nervous and scared."

See *Adjusting to life* on page 17



Photo by Karl Weisel

Deputy defense secretary Paul Wolfowitz (left to right), Pepper's mother-in-law Denise Von Wiecki, Staff Sgt. Jason Pepper and his wife Heather are engaged in a conversation during the 1st Armored Division's Welcome Home Ceremony Oct. 7. Pepper was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor and the Purple Heart.

Adjusting to life

Continued from page 16

Back in Germany the Peppers days are filled with daily travel to the Army hospital in Heidelberg for therapy. Doctors told Jason the Army will not discharge him until he is self-sufficient, he said, which could take up to two years.

"I cannot cook or pour a drink. It used to be normal to cook macaroni and cheese, but now I am afraid of the stove. Am I using the right pot? How about the water? There are still too many things I am concerned about, and it'll take a while. What can I do if someone breaks in when I am alone? Hand therapy is also a big deal for me. For the past five to six months the most trivial things seem very big to me," said Jason.

"I used to love watching movies, but that's no longer fun. I am often bored because there is nothing I can do on my own. I thought I could learn braille to be at least able to read, but it's very difficult to learn and takes a long time. It shattered my whole dream when I learned there is no trick to learning it," he said.

Feeling like a burden

Pepper said he often feels like a burden for

Heather. "It's harder for Heather than it is for me," he said. "She's a cook, maid, physical therapist, mother and wife. Actually she's a single mother with two children, and she does not have the option of being sick or not feeling well."

Serving as Jason's eyes, Heather carries the burden of helping him protect himself, he said. Forgetting to mention a step when they walk together could result in more injuries.

Personal interactions have also changed. "Many people are insecure when they see me, but I don't want them to feel strange just because I cannot see. They should treat me as a normal person," said Pepper.

"You should see how the two German shepherd dogs that belong to my mother-in-law play games with me. Sometimes when I am trying to pick up their toy they sneak up on me and push it out of reach. I can just feel them watching me. It's almost as if they are laughing at me. Naomi starts to do the same. She moves stuff out of my reach and watches me look for it. She often helps me by saying left or right when I am reaching for something. The dogs and my daughter don't seem to have a problem with me being blind and they don't pity me. They encourage me to use my

other senses and to adjust, and I want other people to do the same when they talk to me," he said.

The most painful experience for Jason is how the relationship with his parents has changed.

"One day Heather was surfing the net and typed my name in. She found a story on me that my parents must have done with my hometown newspaper after visiting me in the hospital," he said.

During the visit Jason told his parents that he does not wish to have his photo taken or tell his story to a newspaper.

"Now there was a photo of me in the paper and a story that was not even true," he said.

Apparently his parents also organized several fundraisers. "We've heard that my hometown has organized a Harley Bike run and donated the money to a stateside fund in my name, but we don't know where the money is going to. I only know that we did not receive it," Jason said.

Attempts to clarify this with his parents were unsuccessful. "They refuse to talk to me

or Heather. The only person I am still close to in my family is my brother," he said.

Not giving up

Despite the challenges the couple is facing they have not given up. "I will work again one day. I am in the job placement program of the Wounded Warrior Foundation. And I will

build memories with my daughter Naomi," said Pepper, who will remain in Germany with his family. "She should not have to suffer because her daddy is blind.

"Nobody knows what the future holds. ... I was a Boy Scout as a little boy and we helped blind people. Back

then I never thought I would be 27 and blind. I hope technology will advance and one day they can give me back my vision. I have everything that is needed, I just need something that replaces my eyeballs.

"It only takes a second to get injured, but a lifetime to get better," Jason said. **(Editor's note: The Giessen Community Bank has established a Jason Pepper Fund. Anyone wanting to support the Peppers may donate money to this account.)**

"It only takes a second to get injured, but a lifetime to get better."

284th BSB – Friedberg, Giessen

Community spotlight

Correction

The Oct. 26 issue the *Herald Union* erroneously listed the 284th Base Support Battalion Customer Contact Line as mil 343-1234. The correct number is mil 343-9999.

Next CIB

The next Community Information Briefing takes place Dec. 7 at 10:30 a.m. at the Friedberg Bowling Center on Ray Barracks. The CIB is open to the entire community. Representatives of various directorates will be present to give out first hand information about activities and classes offered.

NPESP job vacancy

Choctaw Management Services Enterprise seeks a part-time (job share) home visitor for the 284th Base Support Battalion's Army Community Service New Parent Education and Support Program. Social workers with a master's degree or nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing science and experience beyond graduation in working with expectant mothers, new parents, families, infants and children are preferred. Applicants must be willing to travel throughout the 284th BSB. Email a resume, cover letter and copy of applicable licenses to Sara.Milbourne@ima-e.army.mil or call mil 370-7840, civ (06221) 57-7840.

Volunteers sought

Army Community Service seeks volunteers for positions throughout the 284th Base Support Battalion. Call Kelly Kreis at mil 324-3713 for information. Agencies that wish to advertise volunteer job openings in the ACS newsletter should forward details to her. Child and Youth Services seeks volunteers for a variety of positions. For details call CLEOS at civ (0641) 402-8216 or mil 343-8216.

Veterans Day ceremonies in Friedberg, Giessen

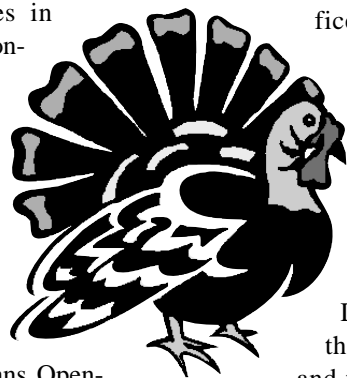
A Veterans Day ceremony will be held Nov. 10 at 3 p.m. on the parade field on Friedberg's Ray Barracks and Nov. 11 at 10 a.m. at the flagpole in front of Building 1 on the Giessen Depot. All are invited to attend to pay tribute to Soldiers past and present.

FCC providers sought

Do you enjoy working with children? Want to make money while working at own home? Family Child Care providers are sought for all communities in the 284th BSB. For information call mil 343-7626 or civ (0641) 402-7626.

Thanksgiving Day Feast

The dining facilities in Giessen and Friedberg sponsor a Thanksgiving Day Feast Nov. 25. The menus include roast turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, vegetables, pies and much more. The cost is \$4.60 for E-4s and below and their families and \$5.40 for E-5s and above, officers and civilians. Open-



Soldiers of the Year named

Story and photo by Petra Roberts

284th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Sgt. Kristopher Shippy and Sgt. Raymond Lee took top honors in 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Soldier of the Year competition.

Shippy, of Company A, 1st Battalion, 37th Armor, was named the brigade's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. Lee, at the time an E-4 with Company A, 1st Battalion 36th Infantry, was selected

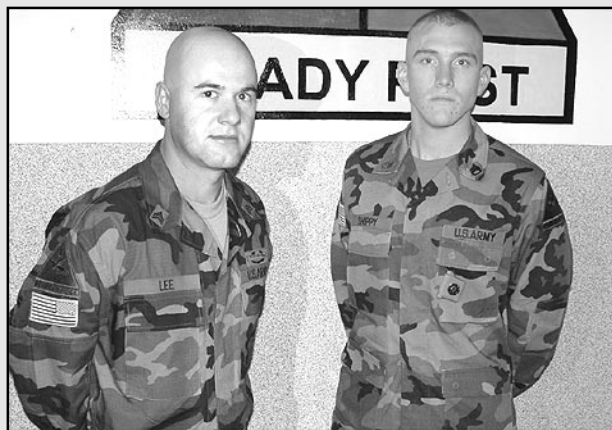
as the brigade's Soldier of the Year.

Both Soldiers passed through the necessary steps, competing at the battalion level and advancing to the brigade level, while on duty in Iraq. In addition to carrying out their missions, both Shippy and Lee faced grueling questioning by board members, sergeants major and command sergeants major.

"I returned from a mission fighting

Moqtada militia forces in Karbala when I was notified to appear before the board the next day," Shippy said.

"These Soldiers wanted to excel in the midst of being in combat. They performed well ahead of their peers, set examples for other Soldiers and showed them that they are leaders," said 1st Brigade's Command



Sgt. Raymond Lee (left) and Staff Sgt. Kristopher Shippy.

Sgt. Major Raymond Houston. "They set the example in a combat environment. They set themselves up to further their military careers and to excel in the Army."

"People, Soldiers look

at us differently," said Shippy. "Having received this award builds self-esteem and confidence. I take 100 percent pride in taking care of Soldiers."

"We also help fellow Soldiers to go before the board," said Lee.

The next hurdle to jump will be the competition for division and corps NCO of the Year and acceptance into the Sergeant Morales Club.

ing and serving times vary in each location. For more information call the Giessen Dining Facility at mil 343-6596/7178, the Sgt. Sadowski Dining Facility in Friedberg at mil 324-2900/2901 or the Howze Dining Facility at mil 343-3558.

ACS Thanksgiving lunch

The 284th Base Support Battalion Army Community Service will host a Thanksgiving hospitality lunch Nov. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to take a break from work or the daily routine to meet, make new friends and enjoy a free lunch. Children are welcome. For details call mil 343-7618.

Holiday food assistance program

The 284th Base Support Chaplains Office accepts donations for the holiday food assistance program until Dec. 6. Donations may include non-perishable food such as sugar, flour, rice, canned food, packed candy, artificial sweeteners, money donations and other items you wish to give to a needy family. Donations can be dropped off at the Giessen and Friedberg chapels and the Chaplains Office located in

Building 115 on the Giessen Depot. For more information call 343-8020.

Outprocessing briefings

The next PCS/ETS outprocessing briefing takes place Nov. 9 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the ITC classroom in Building 4 on the Giessen Depot. A PCS briefing will be held Nov. 23 from 10-11:30 a.m. at the Old Ironsides Movie Theater on Ray Barracks in Friedberg. Spouses are encouraged to attend. For details call mil 343-8077.

Army Family Team Building training

Army Family Building Level II training will be held Nov. 15-17 in the Outreach Center in Butzbach's Roman Way Housing. Participants receive in-depth training on business management, life skills and Army facts during the interactive classes. To register call ACS in Giessen at civ (0641) 402-7218 or ACS in Friedberg at civ (06031) 81-3465.

Shopping, skiing trips

Giessen Outdoor Recreation will host a shopping trip to Tongeren, Belgium, Nov. 20. The cost is \$59 for adults, \$39 for children 4-11 and \$19 for children up to age 3. A trip to Barcelona is scheduled for Nov. 24-28. The cost is \$329 for adults, \$259 for children 4-11 and \$65 for children up to age 3. A skiing trip to Zermatt, Switzerland, takes place Nov. 24-

28. The cost is \$349 for adults, \$199 for children age 4-11 and \$99 for children up to age 3. For details call mil 343-8207.

Keller Theater to feature 'Relatively Speaking'

The Keller Theater will present the White Horse Theatre Company in performances of the comedy "Relatively Speaking" Nov. 11-13 and 18-20. To reserve tickets call the box office Wednesday through Friday from 4:30-8 p.m. at mil 343-6515.

Army Family Action Plan issues sought

Community members are encouraged to participate in the Army Family Action Plan. AFAP provides Soldiers and families a chance to let leaders know what is working, what needs to be improved and how to fix problems to improve quality of life. Suggestions may be written on suggestion forms and dropped off at drop boxes located at every Army Community Service office, post exchanges, shoppettes and commissaries in the 284th BSB. For information call ACS in Giessen at mil 343-7618 or in Friedberg at mil 324-3465.

Scrapbooking classes

Friedberg Arts and Crafts will host scrapbooking classes Nov. 17 to Dec. 5. A beginner class takes place every Monday from 7-8 p.m. and includes page layout, construction, photo cropping and journaling. The cost is \$40. An advanced class takes place every Wednesday from 7-8 p.m. for those already scrapbooking who would like to learn more. Subjects include rubber stamping, color and accessories. The cost is \$60. Classes are taught by scrapbooking guru Dana Molnar. Call Arts and Craft at mil 324-3266 to sign up. Payment in full is due at the time of sign-up.

Giessen plaque shop handles custom orders

The plaque shop at Giessen Arts and Crafts makes small, medium and large size plaques to order. Production time is roughly 10 working days and prices vary. The shop in Building 47 on Giessen Depot is open Tuesday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. For details call mil 343-6445.

Fine arts exhibition for young artists Dec. 18

The 284th Base Support Battalion will host an art exhibit Dec. 18. Young artists age 11-18 are encouraged to enter their artwork. Monochromatic and multicolored drawings, pastel, watercolor, oil or acrylic paintings, prints, mixed media, collage, sculpture and graphic arts are welcome. Work must have been completed within the past year and be original. Artists may enter in all categories, but will be limited to one piece per category. Submissions may not exceed 30 by 40 inches in size and must not be signed. Submit entries to Youth Services by Nov. 19. For more information about the exhibition call Edgardo

Continued on page 19

Landscape architect masters all things green

Protecting the public and the environment

By Alexandra Williams
284th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Ever wonder who decides where trees and plants are placed? Or ever considered who decides when trees must be cut down?

Peter Zeisberger of the 284th Base Support Battalion Directorate of Public Works Operation and Maintenance Division is responsible for the proper care of vegetation on military installations, in housing areas and local training areas. The landscape architect said he is committed to the safety of the community.

"That means I have to frequently check trees and vegetation to ensure they are not damaged," said Zeisberger. "I am also involved in several nature conservation projects of the 284th BSB. One example is the recent stream revitalization on the Giessen Depot."

Force protection also plays an important role in his job. "For example I have to do annual inspections on the bushes to ensure that they do not provide cover for 'bad guys.' Fences have to be kept free as well. When we plant trees or hedges the height has to be considered," he said.

It's not always nature that has to give way for safety.

"I am proud that I was able to save the



Photo by Alexandra Williams

Landscape architect Peter Zeisberger (left) and Konstantin Gross of the 284th Base Support Battalion's Directorate of Public Works Environmental Office inspect a tree on the Giessen Depot. Zeisberger is involved in many nature conservation projects.

hedge around the ceremonial area where the flagpole is located. There was a lot of pressure on us to remove it because some people think that due to its height, it poses a safety threat, while we (the Environmental Office) think it actually prevents accidents because motorists have to stop at the intersection. If it wasn't for the hedge many motorists would just go around the corner without stopping

which could cause collisions," he said.

Zeisberger's efforts are not always met with immediate understanding by members of the community.

"Earlier this year we had to cut down some of the weeping willows in Butzbach, and we received phone calls from upset residents because the trees looked like skeletons. After explaining that it served not only the safety

of residents but also the well-being of the trees they understood," he said.

Deadwood in the tops of trees can pose a threat for residents — especially when the trees are located near playgrounds, said Zeisberger.

Since he started working for the 284th BSB he has seen many changes on the installation, he said. "Nothing was done when this base was closed a couple of years ago, so when I came here five years ago I was very busy," said Zeisberger.

"Looking back I must say the changes in the past years are tremendous," he said. "We've come a long way. We had a lot of inherited problems from the old days and unfortunately we had to get rid of a lot of trees and greenery. Due to the lack of care they were too damaged. But we created many new green areas. The parking lot in front of Building 119 for example used to be a shabby parking lot with gravel and huge pot holes. Now we have a nice parking lot with lots of grass and trees."

Zeisberger said he appreciates the desire of community members to beautify housing areas by planting flowers, but he recommends prior coordination with his office. "I can advise them what is allowed, where plants can be planted and what is illegal."

Zeisberger's office is located in Room 231 in Building 32 on the Giessen Depot. He can be reached at mil 343-6667.

Community spotlight

Continued from page 18

Rosales at civ (0641) 402-6129 or (06033) 73048.

Don't abandon pets

The Giessen Tierheim (animal shelter) encourages pet owners not to abandon their pets if they can no longer keep them. Many abandoned

pets are killed in accidents or die of starvation and thirst. The Tierheim will take pets that can not be kept and find a new home for your pet. No pet will be killed and no questions are asked other than a true description of the animal's character to help in finding a suitable home. For a small fee the Tierheim also

boards pets for owners who will be away from home. For details call civ (0641) 52251. The Tierheim is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 3-5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 3-6 p.m.

Bulk trash pickup

The next bulk trash pickup date

for all housing areas in the 284th Base Support Battalion are Nov. 12 and 22.

Hearts and Hands

The Hearts and Hands community club will host a bingo night every third Friday of the month from 7-8 p.m. The club seeks volunteers. Welfare grant applications for organizations are now available at Army Community Service offices in the 284th Base Support Battalion. Deadline is Dec. 10. Call Kathy Monge at mil 343-7618 or send email to heartsandhandscc@yahoo.com.

Hometown holiday greetings

Soldiers and their families can send free holiday greetings to their families through their hometown newspapers. Forms can be filled out and sent online at <http://hn.afnews.af.mil>. The deadline for the program is Dec. 5. For more information call Petra Roberts at mil 343-1600.

English as a Second Language classes

Registration for English as a Second Language classes at the Friedberg Education Center is un-

der way. Classes will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays Nov. 16 to Jan. 2 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Cost is \$50 including materials. For information call mil 324-3119 or civ (06031) 83119.

German canteen open

The German canteen, located on the second floor of Building 32 on Giessen Depot serves breakfast, a daily lunch menu and coffee and cake Monday-Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Respite care available

Families of Soldiers in ranks E-1 through E-4 are eligible for 10 hours per month of child care free of charge through the Child and Youth Services Respite Care program. For details call civ (0641) 402-8216 or mil 343-8216.

Security Office closed

The 284th Base Support Battalion Security Office will be closed Nov. 15-19 and Dec. 20-29. For assistance and fingerprinting appointments during those periods call mil 343-7051/7031.

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau

Community notes . . . Community notes

Veterans Day Service

A service in honor of those who served will be held for Soldiers and family members Nov. 9 at 5 p.m. at the Fliegerhorst Chapel on Fliegerhorst Kaserne. Call Chaplain (Capt.) Trotter at mil 322-7525 for details.

Native American observances

Hanau community Equal Opportunity advisers invite the community to a Native American Heritage Month observance Nov. 17 from 9-10:30 a.m. at Old Argonner Elementary School and 1-2:30 p.m. Nov. 17 at Hanau Middle School. Guest speakers Claudia Fox Tree from the Taino-Arawak tribe and Ella Garlits from the Navajo tribe will share Native American music, stories and more. EO also is holding an essay contest for students in those schools with the theme "How You Preserve Culture and Heritage." Essays should be one-to-two double-spaced pages long. Deadline for entry is Nov. 12. Winners will be announced during the observances Nov. 17. Call Sgt. 1st Class Gayden at mil 323-2012, Sgt. 1st Class Sanders at mil 323-2998, Sgt. 1st Class Robinson at mil 322-7397 or Sgt. 1st Class Patronas at mil 322-8605 for more information.

Thanksgiving Service

A Thanksgiving Service will be held Nov. 25 from 10:45-11:45 a.m. at the Pioneer Chapel. The entire community is invited to join together to celebrate the blessings that God has provided. Call Chaplain (Maj.) McClearn at mil 323-3067 or civ (06181) 180-3067 for more information.

Weekly drawings at Andrews Federal Credit Union

Andrews Federal Credit Union will do a weekly drawing every week in November. Weekly prize winners will receive a \$25 Army and Air Force Exchange Service gift card. A grand prize drawing will be held Nov. 22. Prizes include an MP3 player, a DVD player and a Thanksgiving basket including a turkey. Call civ (06181) 95380 for details.

NAF property sale

A Non Appropriated Funds excess property sale will be held Nov. 20 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Building 506 on Hanau's Wolfgang Shopping Center. Items include electronics, fur-

niture, tools, linen, skis and more. It is open to ID card holders only.

Red Cross volunteers

The Hanau American Red Cross seeks volunteers wishing to choose between the clerical and medical fields or to support fundraisers. All Red Cross volunteers will be registered with the Army Volunteer Corps Program coordinator. Call the Red Cross Office at mil 322-1760, civ (06181) 88-1760 or Bianca Moton at civ (0160) 910-52378.

Marriage enrichment seminar

"Building Strong and Ready Families" is a free marriage enrichment seminar in which married Soldiers and their spouses can learn to communicate better, manage conflicts and spend time to build their families. The seminar will be held Nov. 18-20 at the Sauerland Stern Hotel in Willingen. Meals and accommodations are free. Call Chaplain Green at mil 322-7579 or Chaplain Tran at mil 322-7013 for information.

Santa suits for rent

The Hanau American Red Cross has Santa suits for rent this holiday season. The cost is \$35 a day. Rental includes use of the Santa coat and pants, gloves, hat, beard and wig. Early reservations are recommended to ensure suit is available. For reservations call the Red Cross at mil 322-1760/8205 or civ (06181) 88-1760/8205.

Polish pottery bingo

The American Red Cross will hold a Polish pottery bingo fundraiser Nov. 17 at 6 p.m. at the Hanau High School cafeteria. There will be seven bingo games and one special bingo as well as raffle prizes. The cost is \$2 per card; \$5 for three cards and \$4 for the special bingo card. Call the Red Cross at mil 322-8520 for more information.

EFMP highlights

The next Exceptional Family Member Program Support Network Meeting will be held Nov. 22 from 4-5 p.m. at the Wolfgang Outreach Center in Building 514. A class on "Parenting Children with ADD/ADHD" will follow from 5-6 p.m. Learn valuable ways to teach your child responsibility, good behavior and more. Call Jane Montanaro, EFMP specialist, at mil 322-9275 for information. EFMP seeks families or individuals to give just a little of their time to deserving

families. There are care givers in our community who are caring for adult family members who have special needs. These care givers often spend day and night caring for their family members. Respite Care offers these care givers a chance to take a break, run errands or enjoy some quiet time. If you or someone you know would like to participate in a program that provides relief for these families, contact Jane Montanaro at Army Community Service in Hanau's Building 9 on Pioneer Kaserne. Call mil 322-9275 or civ (06181) 88-9275. Care is usually paid for, but can be provided on a volunteer basis. If you are seeking respite care for your child with special needs call Carol Green at mil 322-9144 or civ (06181) 88-9144.

ACS professional development classes

Army Community Service offers an **Employment Orientation** Nov. 16, 23 and 30. A **Dress for Success seminar** will be held Nov. 10, an **Interview Techniques seminar** Nov. 11 and a **Resume Workshop** Nov. 17. All classes take place from 10-11:30 a.m. in Building 9, Room 104 on Pioneer Kaserne. For information call mil 322-9191. ACS has 13 computers available to create your resume and search the Internet for vacancies. All computers are equipped with Internet access, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Visit ACS on Pioneer Kaserne, Building 9, Room 204 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Red Cross class

Hanau's American Red Cross features a Nov. 17 **Professional Community First Aid and Safety** class. Deadline for signup is Nov. 15. The course includes adult, child and infant CPR, first aid basics, automatic external defibrillation essentials, two-man rescue and prevention of disease transmission. The class will be held from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the American Red Cross in Building 4, third floor, on Pioneer Kaserne. Cost is \$35 and must be paid by the class sign-up deadline. If any unit or organization would like to set up a class for their Soldiers or staff, Hanau American Red Cross would be more than happy to work with them. Contact Jay or Sharon at mil 322-1760/8205 or civ (06181) 88-1760/8205.

Family Readiness Group training

Army Community Service offers Family Readiness Group training Nov. 23-24, Jan. 11-12, Feb. 22-23, March 29-30, April

Continued on facing page



Post offices gear up for holiday mail

The Hanau Post Office will operate three stations this year, as well as run a service in Büdingen.

Two stations are located on Wolfgang Shopping Center. The primary location will be Building 546, located next door to the Kids Corner and the Arts and Crafts store. The secondary location will be Building 505, the Hanau Post Office.

A third station will be located on Fliegerhorst Kaserne in the theater.

Hours of operation are: **Wolfgang Shopping Center's Building 546** — Monday to Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Thursday noon to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; **Building 505** — same hours except closed on Saturdays; **Fliegerhorst theater** — Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.;

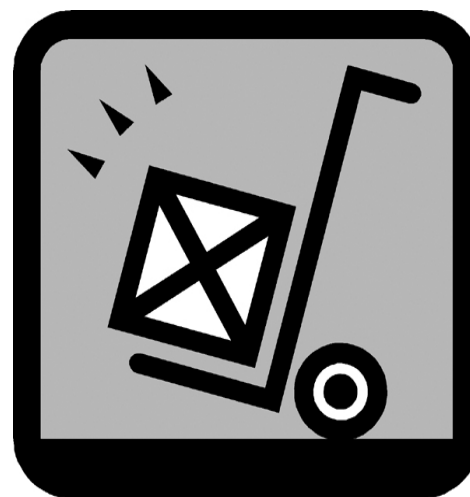
Büdingen's Armstong Barracks — Monday to Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Fliegerhorst's facility will not be able to provide registered mail service or accept credit/debit cards.

Preparing parcels and packages should be done at the primary location — Building 546 at the Wolfgang Shopping Center where paper, tape, customs forms and writing utensils will be available.

To mail five packages or more, make an appointment with the main post office for 8:30-9:30 a.m. All packages must be properly addressed and have all customs forms before appointments.

The following dates are the last recommended mailing dates in order for parcels to arrive in the United States before the holidays: Nov. 20 for SAM parcels, Dec. 4 for



PAL parcels, Dec. 11 for priority parcels and first class letters, Dec. 18 for Express Mail. The APO will be closed Nov. 11, 25, Dec. 31,

Jan. 1, 15 and 17.

For more information call Sgt. 1st Class Dean or Mr. Harvey at mil 322-8683/9386 or civ (06181) 88-8683/9386.

Free packing materials available

The U.S. Postal Service offers free packing materials to family and friends of military members who are deployed overseas (APO or FPO addresses).

To take advantage of this service call 800-610-8734, press 1 for English and then press 3 to talk to an operator. Once the operator is on the line ask for the "Military Pack" and you will receive free boxes, packing materials, tape and mailing labels.

These products are to be used to mail care packages to service members.

414th BSB – Büdingen, Hanau



Photos by Michael Mitchell

What's Out There Fair

Fitness instructors Andrea Leschak and Linda Hahn describe the many physical fitness classes available, including aerobics and kickboxing, at local fitness centers during the What's Out There Fair Oct. 23 at Hanau's Pioneer Kaserne. Photo right: Child and Youth Services' Sheriley Singleton helps Krystal Brown make a mask at the fair. Community members had a chance to learn about the many services and opportunities in the 414th Base Support Battalion.



Community notes . . . Community notes

Continued from page 20
26-27, May 24-25 and June 28-29. Learn about everything from FRG misunderstandings to the role of the FRG support network. Training is held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at ACS in Pioneer Kaserne's Building 9. Sign up at ACS or email amy.cuebas@104asg.mwr.army.mil for more information. Units may arrange for rear detachment and family readiness liaison training at their own convenience. The training is available in one-day and two-day training menus. All training must be requested two weeks in advance for staffing and scheduling. Participants must register two days in advance by email. Call Amy Cuebas at mil 322-8766.

Awana Kids Club

The Awana Kids Club, a Protestant program sponsored by 414th Base Support Battalion's Chaplains Office, meets every Tuesday from 6-7:45 p.m. at Argonner Elementary School on Old Argonner Kaserne. The club is open to children in grades kindergarten to six. Meetings include Scripture memorization, games and fellowship. Awana welcomes volunteers who would like to contribute their gifts and

abilities in music, training and games. Call Terri Petrie at civ (06051) 828 655 or Chaplain (Capt.) Xuan Tran at mil 322-7013 for details.

Hearts United Group

The Hearts United Group is a support group for family members of deployed loved ones. Counselors are on site to assist with any issues. The group meets every Tuesday at 10 a.m. at Büdingen Army Community Service, Building 2207. Call Keylah Bonebrake at mil 321-4786 or civ (06042) 80-786 for more information.

IACS in effect on many gates

The automated Installation Access Control System is in use on many gates in Hanau. Adjusting to the new system may result in delays. People who have not registered should expect considerable delays as they must be signed into the IACS computer manually. If you have not yet registered, visit the IACS office in Building 21 on Pioneer Kaserne.

Issues of concern

Submit your issues to be considered at the 414th Base Support

Battalion's Army Family Action Plan Conference by Jan. 14. Fill out an issue sheet and mail it to 414th BSB Army Community Service, AFAP Coordinator, Unit 20193 Box 0006, APO AE 09165. Or fill out the issue sheet online by clicking on the AFAP link on the 414th BSB website, www.hanau.army.mil. You can also send your concerns by email to afap.issues@104asg.mwr.army.mil. AFAP is an opportunity for Soldiers, family members and Department of Defense civilians to voice their opinions and offer quality of life enhancement suggestions. Call Amy Cuebas at mil 322-8766 or civ (06181) 88-8766.

Do it yourself

The Self-Help Stores offer basic and advanced do-it-yourself classes in Hanau and Büdingen. The classes are free for occupants of government and leased housing. Stop by your local Self-Help Store to reserve a spot or on the day of the class. Classes will be held at the Büdingen Self-Help Store in Building 2208 on Armstrong Barracks Mondays from 10-11 a.m. and at Hanau Self-Help, Building 28 on Pioneer Kaserne, Wednesdays from 10-11 a.m. Lawn mowers, leaf blowers, goggles, weed eaters and other lawn care tools are free loaner items. Gas is even provided for the gas mowers. You do not have to be a building coordinator to sign out these items. Call the Büdingen store at mil 321-4778 or the Hanau store at mil 322-8200 for information.

Recruiting Girl Scout leaders

Girl Scouts in Hanau,

Gelnhausen and Büdingen seek leaders for Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadets and Studio 2B. Contact Lisa Wenke at civ (06181) 9062 899 or (0175) 8518 695.

AAFES jobs

American citizens can apply for Army and Air Force Exchange Service jobs in Hanau, Giessen and Rhein Main on the web at www.aafes.com. Interested local nationals should visit the Human Resources Office at the Wolfgang Shopping Center, next to Popeye's. It is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or call civ (06181) 958 4403.

Kid's Korner

Enjoy a birthday package, state-of-the-art games and more at Wolfgang Shopping Center's new Kid's Korner in Hanau. Call civ (06181) 88-9013 for information on booking a private party.

Computer sign-up

All visitors to the Central Processing Facility on Pioneer Kaserne should report to Building 21, Room 10, for a computerized sign-in. All agencies monitor the sign-in list and page the next customer. Personnel IOP, finance IOP, installation access, ID cards, transportation, SATO travel, housing (in/out processing), CLEOS and clearing papers/final-out at CPF all use this new electronic sign-in.

Alcoholics Anonymous

The Hanau Army Substance Abuse Program hosts Alcoholics Anonymous meetings every Wednesday at 7 p.m. in Room 327,

Building 3 on Hanau's Pioneer Kaserne (enter the building at the first stairwell closest to the main street and proceed to the third floor, end of the hall). For more information call Ken Petersen at mil 322-8911/8762.

Basic car care class

Learn about basic car maintenance at Hanau Auto Skills every Wednesday at 1 p.m. Topics include changing your oil, fixing flat tires, checking fluid levels and brake pads for wear. The class fee is \$10. Call Hanau Auto Skills at mil 322-8247/8625 to sign up.

Sexual assault hotline

The Defense Department has established a toll-free telephone number for individuals to provide information to the Task Force on Care for Victims of Sexual Assault. The hotline, (800) 497-6261, is staffed from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time weekdays. "Every service member deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and dignity," said David S.C. Chu, undersecretary of defense. "Sexual assault is criminal conduct and will not be tolerated in the Department of Defense. Information gathered from the call center will assist the task force and defense officials in developing policies and programs to improve assistance for victims of assaults and enhance prevention efforts, Chu said. (DoDNews)

Go power walking

All 414th Base Support Battalion fitness centers offer power walks Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9 a.m.

Speaker touts vital role of education

Celebrating Native American heritage

By Christine Kümpel
414th Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

"The Navajo people feel a strong relationship with the land they consider home. That's why quite a large number of them prefer to live in the reservation," said Pauleen Billie, guest speaker at Hanau's Native American Heritage Month observance Nov. 2 at the John F. Kennedy Dining Facility on Fliegerhorst Kaserne.

The Navajo tribe is the largest Indian tribe in the United States with more than 360,000 registered Navajos. The original Navajo territory, which is also the location of the only Navajo reservation in the United States, is about the size of West Virginia. Its core land is found in Arizona, New Mexico and parts of Utah. Although Navajos live everywhere in the world, the majority live on the U.S. reservation, said the educator and Native American representative.

Billie, who described living conditions on the reservation as

substandard, said one of her major tasks as the executive director of the Navajo school boards in Window Rock, Ariz., is to promote education among the Navajo Nation.

"When I was working as a teacher I told my students they have to be their own teachers, since they were the only ones who could make the decisions that would shape their future life."

Coming from a family of eight children with parents who did not have the privilege of obtaining a school education, Billie said she is living proof of the promise the Navajo tribe made when they were temporarily settled in Oklahoma in the late 1860s — "We will change through education in order to go back to our mother country."

This is the first time Billie has visited Germany and an Army base. "It brings back memories of the boarding schools I used to attend as a student," she said. Billie was also scheduled to speak in Baumholder Nov. 3, Friedberg Nov. 4 and Wiesbaden Nov. 5.



Photo by Ulrike Raab

Pauleen Billie talks to Soldiers about the Navajo Nation during an Equal Opportunity Native American Heritage Month observance at the John F. Kennedy Dining Facility on Fliegerhorst Kaserne Nov. 2.



Student involvement in Gelnhausen

Gelnhausen Elementary School students sign a pledge to stay drug-free during Red Ribbon Week. Photo far right: Kindergartner Chiara Thorpe hugs McGruff the crime dog. Hope Trujillo, Patrick Iliff, Ben Pico, Victor Palomo, Heather Glick, Karen Hernandez and Kristen Abellas were winners of the school's Red Ribbon Week poster contest. Photo right: First-grader Yamil Garcia casts his vote for president during a mock election at the school in which President George Bush was declared the winner.



Photos by Pennie Allen

Fire destroys retired veteran's home

Story and photos by Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs
Office

A late night fire wiped out 77 years worth of personal history for a retired Army veteran in Hanau's Grossauheim Oct. 24.

The fire, allegedly caused by a short in a heating pad, destroyed Jose Diaz's house, his belongings, clothing, photo albums, recognition for a distinguished career both in the military and afterwards, and important documents. "All that I could save was my wallet, a T-shirt, robe, a pair of socks and my house slippers," said Diaz.

"I plugged in my heating pad and it was set on a timer. I went to the living room to watch the news," he said. "While watching TV I heard a noise in the back and heard things falling off the shelves — books and things. I went in and tried to put out the fire with a fire extinguisher, but it was already too big for me to put out."

Diaz said because of renovation work his phone was out of order. "I went next door to a German neighbor to call the fire department.

"Later after the fire department did its



Jose Diaz stands in the charred wreckage of his home in Hanau's Grossauheim.

thing, the police let me enter the house again and I saw that what was not burnt was damaged by water or smoke," said Diaz. "At the moment I'm trying to salvage my things by washing them. ... I borrowed a pump from my neighbor to drain out the water that got in through the hole in my roof."

With the roof over his head and clothes destroyed, Diaz said he was most appreciative of the help provided by the German Red Cross in the hours following the blaze. "I want to express my thanks and appreciation for the efforts of Ingeborg Seitz from the German Red Cross. They bent over backwards to help me," he said, explaining that he was contacted by the Red Cross through the fire department, provided with clothes and offered a place to spend the night.

"The Red Cross was extremely helpful. They arranged for somebody to open the clothing storage facility so that I would have

something to wear," he said.

Diaz said he was also offered food and invited to spend the night in the home of Seitz. "In the morning she said 'there's the coffee pot and something to eat.' I had effectively the run of the house."

Since then the 77-year-old retired veteran of Mexican ancestry has been living with German relatives while awaiting insurance appraisals and the chance to salvage anything worth saving. "That's one of the problems I'm having — all of my paperwork was lost in the fire," he said, explaining that his bank helped him track down his insurance company and other agencies through allotments on his bank statements.

Once everything is settled, Diaz said he plans to rent an apartment in the area and perhaps spend six months out of the year in someplace warm such as Portugal, Spain or northern Africa. "I like it here except in winter

— my old bones and winter don't fit together," said Diaz, whose second German wife resides in a medical institution in Alsfeld. His first wife passed away in 1991.

"I first came to Hanau in 1946 as a private and was assigned to the 756th Engineer Parts Supply Company," he said, adding that that's when he met and married his first wife. He recalled helping German neighbors clear the rubble leftover from World War II from their homes and sometimes finding the remains of family members buried in the basements of bombed buildings.

After Army tours to the United States, Japan, Germany and France, Diaz asked for a transfer in 1961 back to Germany where he planned to retire. In 1965 the then specialist seven left military service while serving at the Quartermaster Supply Agency in Giessen. "After that I worked for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service for 13 years in Nürnberg, Giessen and Dallas, Texas. After I retired from AAFES I went to work for the community bank — at that time the American Express — at the Abrams Building (V Corps Headquarters) in Frankfurt."

After retiring for good in 1992, Diaz started what became a 10-year annual tradition of volunteering every holiday season for several months at the Hanau Army Post Office. "I was still used to working, and I ended up doing 10 Christmases running. I was there processing mail November through January," he said.

At the age of 75, Diaz finally decided to take a break from the working world. "I thought it was time to relax and let someone else take a crack at it."

While the material recognition — certificates and other awards — may have been lost in the recent fire, Diaz said the memories live on. And anyone who had the pleasure of working with the retired veteran over the years knows all about his hard work and dedication. (Editor's note: *The Herald Union* recognized Jose Diaz with a "Saluting those who serve" feature in the Feb. 19, 2002, issue.)



Jose Diaz examines his old Army uniforms which he hopes to salvage.

1-1st Cav makes a difference in Büdingen

By Staff Sgt. James J.
Chastain

Headquarters and Headquarters
Troop, 1-1st Cavalry

It was unseasonably warm and sunny as 25 volunteers from 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program stepped off the squadron bus in downtown Büdingen Oct. 23. The troopers were out to help beautify the city that is home to the squadron in honor of Make a Difference Day by picking up trash along a stretch of the Seemenbach River.

Make a Difference Day, marked annually on the fourth Saturday of October, was created by USA Weekend magazine as a national

day of celebrating neighbors helping neighbors in the United States. The 1-1st Cav Soldiers showed how easily the practice could cross cultural borders.

Wearing Battle Dress Uniforms, wet weather boots and a smattering of Stetsons, the troopers waded through the shallow water cleaning up years' worth of trash dropped from the bridge and sidewalk along the river.

Many town residents out for a Saturday stroll paused to watch them as they climbed down into the water. The splashing and laughter began in earnest as the Soldiers pulled a motor scooter from a deeper stretch of the river.

"It's wonderful what you're

doing," said Büdingen resident Hans-Peter Kaiser, as he passed by. "This is our drinking water. This is just beautiful."

The Make A Difference Day excursion was organized by Pfc. Graham, the 1-1st Cavalry BOSS representative, and led by Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport. By the time it was over, squadron Soldiers had collected approximately 20 bags of trash, one tricycle, several unidentifiable large metal pieces and one scooter.

"This community wholeheartedly supported the squadron during our deployment to Iraq. This is an opportunity for us to give something back," said Davenport, removing his wet weather boots.



Photo by Staff Sgt. James J. Chastain

Soldiers collect trash along the Seemenbach River in Büdingen.